

Why Data Matter

Mary Emery

Sociology and Rural Studies

SDSU

Think of one way data has made a difference for you or your organization

- Share your story
- Listen for common themes and insights in the stories of others

Why data matter?

- Funding is often determined by data
 - Allocation of existing funds
 - Grants opportunities to generate additional funds
- Policy making
 - How to leverage limited funding to generate the most change?
 - Reversing existing policy based on data
- Applied research to understand the challenges and opportunities we face

Why data matter - funding

Imagine you are a program officer at a regional foundation focused on wellness and you receive a proposal that includes the following data to support the project.

- 5% of our clients have been diagnosed with diabetes
- Nine out of 10 clients report health issues
- 15% of people in the service area lives in households below the level of poverty

What do we really know about the people this program intends to serve? What should we know?

Why data matter?

Imagine you are responsible for making recommendations for allocating funding for special projects and you receive a proposal for a STEM diversity initiative that includes the following data.

- 25% of underrepresented students score below average on 8th grade math tests
- 100 underrepresented kids participate in at least one a STEM related after school activities
- 15% of underrepresented students go on to college with a desire to major in a STEM related field

What do we really know about the kids this program intends to serve? What should we know?

If you were writing a grant, what kind of data would you need?

- Describe the population
- Compare the population
- Identify key characteristics
 - What makes this group unique?
 - What makes their need compelling?

Which of the following is true?

- AA is the best resource to address addiction
- School prevention programs (DARE, JUST SAY NO) lower the chances children will use drugs or alcohol.
- The death penalty deters crime.
- Early childhood education wastes tax payer dollars.

Why do we persist in things that don't work and cut out things that do work?

Why data matter – Policy?

- Are our streets safer when more people go to prison? What are the trade offs?
- What about school meals? Did school breakfast play a role in the obesity epidemic?
- Do children fare better in schools with appropriate pre-school programming?
- Are roads safer with rotaries?

Why data matter!

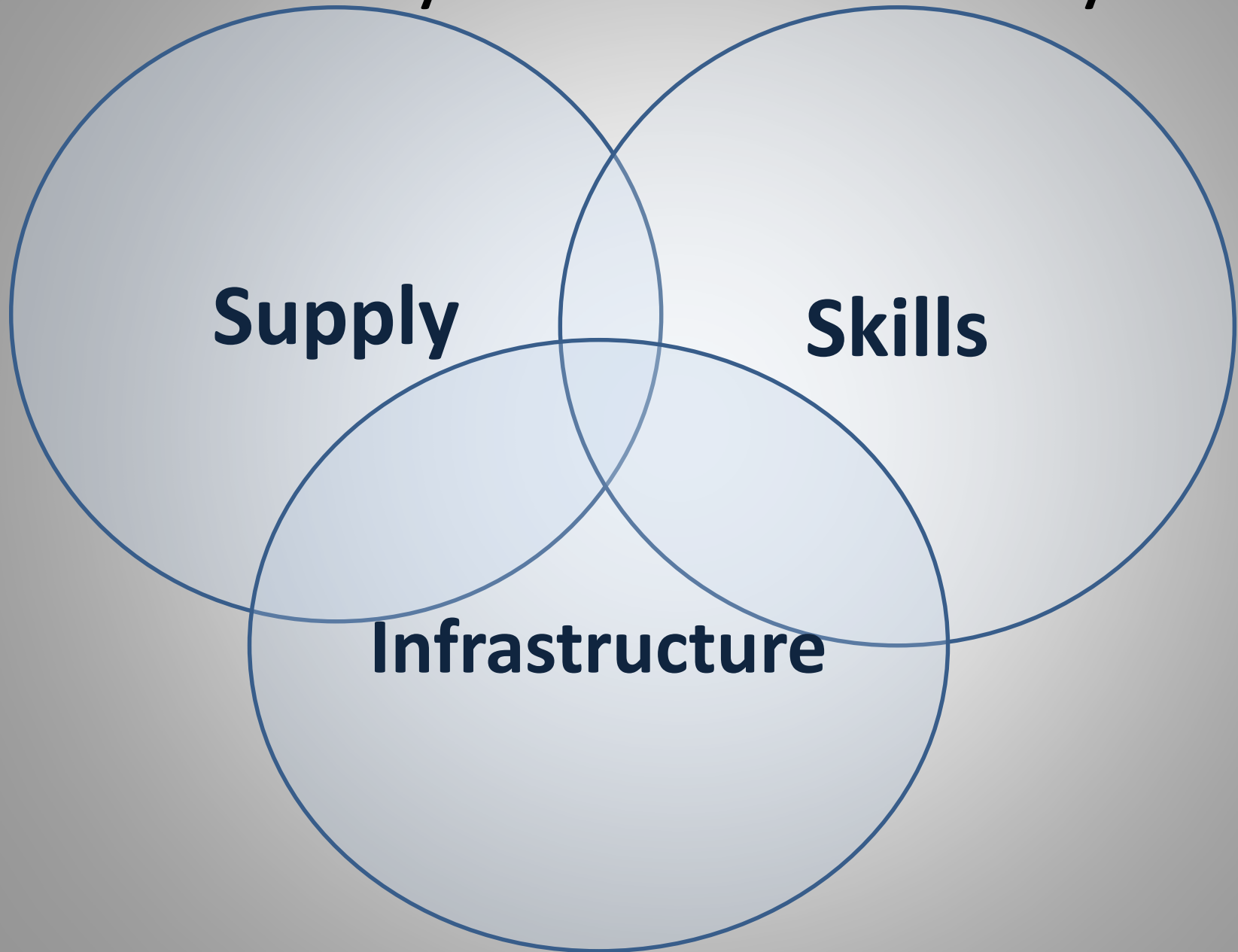
- Understand the situation instead of perceptions of the situation
- Know if changes we make actually lead to better outcomes.

Creating community informatics resources

- To better understand local, regional and state information and to take action to improve access and quality of data
- To harness the power of information to create more prosperous communities

-Community information toolkit (McKnight Foundation)

Community information ecosystem



Community information ecosystem

- Supply:
 - Government sources
 - Community/regional/state news
 - Quality of life issues

-Community information toolkit (McKnight Foundation)

- Skills
 - Who can find what?
 - Who exchanges information with others?
 - How the community received information from governmental sources

-Community information toolkit (McKnight Foundation)

- Infrastructure

- Quality of local journalism
- Vibrancy of libraries
- Accessibility online
- Opportunities to discuss freely
- Access to high speed internet
- Availability of digital literacy training

- -Community information toolkit (McKnight Foundation)

Strategies to Engage People with Data

- Part of planning activities
- Community scavenger hunts
- Community scorecards
- Student projects
- Community classes

Questions?